

# Alberta northwest committee disappointed with provincial government's proposed caribou protection plans

**December 21, 2017 – Fort Vermilion, AB – The Northwest Species at Risk (NWSAR) municipal Committee has been engaging with the provincial government for over a year to find solutions to protect the region's threatened Woodland Caribou, while also protecting northwest Alberta jobs.**

**The government has just released their proposed plans to protect the region's caribou. The plans have been released to the public for feedback until March 2018.**

**After a preliminary look at the proposed plans, the NWSAR Committee is disappointed and opposed to the government's proposal, specifically as it relates to a potential increase of more conservation lands in their region.**

The Committee sees the plans as extremely detrimental to the region's economic prosperity. As well, through the Committee's extensive caribou research, they know that the government's proposal will also not effectively protect the caribou.

"We are very disappointed that the government has chosen to ignore our research and our input as local stakeholders who live and work in our region. What the government is doing is effectively sterilizing future resources and therefore putting many of our citizens out of work and severely damaging several of our municipality's tax revenues for generations to come," said Lisa Wardley, Chair of the NWSAR Committee and Deputy Reeve of Mackenzie County.

"The provincial government's lack of understanding for our region and complete disregard for our industries hurts not only us, but all Albertans with lost economic activity," continued Wardley.

"In tough economic times this is not the approach they should be taking. We will continue to advocate for our position with the federal government as they will be reviewing the province's plans and make a final decision," said Wardley.

Crystal McAteer, Vice-Chair of the NWSAR Committee and Mayor of the Town of High Level, added, "This absolutely contradicts the message that the Minister of Environment

and Parks publically stated to our region and local media when she visited our area in August 2017.”

The Minister specifically said: “We know that we can recover this species, while ensuring that we protect jobs and livelihoods and vibrant communities here in the north and elsewhere”. [...] “Our approach is we need to make sure the environment and economy goes hand in hand”.

- Hon. Shannon Phillips, Minister of Environment and Parks, August 2017 – taken from Peace River Broadcasting, radio interview

Minister Phillips also, **“specifically assured there will be no protected area or park in their draft caribou protection plans”**.

- Hon. Shannon Phillips, Minister of Environment and Park, August 30, 2017 – taken from the Echo Pioneer newspaper

McAteer added, “If the provincial government is going to break their promises to the people – first they have a lot of explaining to do, to our citizens, and second, we will be doubling down our efforts to ensure the federal government understands the vital economic activity in our area that supports so many families. As well as, the extensive research we have done on how to effectively protect caribou without devastating our economy. We strongly believe in a balanced approach, and that is something we will continue to keep advocating for.”

“We strongly encourage all citizens in northwest Alberta to make their voices heard by telling the provincial government what they think of their plans through their public consultation sessions as well as through the NWSAR public consultation sessions,” said Terry Ungarian, NWSAR Committee member and Reeve for the County of Northern Lights. “This is absolutely necessary for the future of our region, for our communities and for our children and grandchildren.”

In June 2017 the NWSAR Committee submitted an extensive 180-page report to both the provincial and federal governments with recommendations to protect and recover caribou populations in a sustainable way that doesn’t hurt communities and protects jobs.

The Committee’s report includes extensive scientific research, socio-economic analysis and stakeholder input from a variety of industry, community groups and the public at large.

To learn more about the NWSAR Committee and to view their report and recommendations visit: [AlbertaNWSAR.ca](http://AlbertaNWSAR.ca). To provide feedback on the Alberta Government’s proposed caribou protection plans visit: <https://talkaep.alberta.ca/caribou-range-planning>

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## **BACKGROUND**

### **Woodland Caribou**

Boreal Woodland Caribou are designated as a threatened species under federal and provincial legislation. Both levels of government require Recovery Strategies and Action Plans to protect boreal caribou. Range plans for each caribou herd is a requirement by the federal government.

Alberta is expected to put in place 15 draft Range Plans for 15 boreal caribou populations this winter. The federal government is expected to provide a written response in April, 2018, that will deliver an assessment of whether or not the province's draft range plans will provide meaningful progress towards fulfilling legislative requirements to protect and recover the Woodland Caribou.

### **NWSAR Committee Information**

The Committee is comprised of municipal councillors from: Mackenzie County, County of Northern Lights, Town of High Level, Town of Rainbow Lake, Clear Hills County and the Town of Manning. For more information visit: [AlbertaNWSAR.ca](http://AlbertaNWSAR.ca).

### **NWSAR FACTS**

The region has a population of approximately 30,000 people and is 120,000 square kilometers.

The area's main industries are resourced based, heavily dependent on oil and gas, forestry and agriculture.